

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8772
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMCONSUL MEDAN
AMCONSUL SURABAYA
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 6336

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, ID
SUBJECT: MINISTER SALIM COMMENTS ON CORRUPTION

1. SEVERAL USDAI OFFICERS MET RECENTLY WITH EMIL SALIM, MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE SUPERVISION OF DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT, AT THE MINISTER'S INVITATION, TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE US ASSISTANCE IN PROGRAM EVALUATION AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL FIELD. AT SALIM'S INITIATIVE, HOWEVER, A SUBSTANTIAL PORTION OF THE MORE THAN TWO HOUR MEETING DEALT WITH THE ISSUE OF CORRUPTION. A FULL ACCOUNT OF THE MEETING IS BEING REPORTED IN AN AID MEMCON. FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS OF THE MINISTER'S COMMENTS ON CORRUPTION.

2. SALIM SAID THAT HE AND MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE CONTROL OF THE STATE APPARATUS SOEMARLIN HAD BEEN GIVEN A "MANDATE" BY PRESIDENT SUHARTO TO VIGOROUSLY ATTACK
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CORRUPTION AND THAT AS NECESSARY THEY COULD DRAW ON THE FULL APPARATUS OF KOPKAMTIB. SALIM WENT ON TO SAY THAT UNLESS DRAMATIC ACTION IS TAKEN SOON TO CONVINCE THE INDONESIAN PEOPLE THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS SERIOUS ABOUT REDUCING CORRUPTION, THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE THAT INDONESIA'S CURRENT FORM OF GOVERNMENT WILL NOT LAST FOR MORE THAN FIVE YEARS. HE STRESSED THAT INDONESIA'S

DILEMMA IS HOW TO PROCEED VIGOROUSLY AGAINST OFFICIALS WHO ARE BENEFITTING ILLEGALLY FROM THEIR GOVERNMENT POSITIONS WHILE AT THE SAME TIME ADHERING TO THE PRINCIPLE OF "INNOCENT UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY."

3. SALIM SAID THAT HIS MAJOR PROBLEM IS HOW TO GET INFORMATION THAT CAN BE USED IN A COURT OF LAW. OBTAINING INCONTROVERTIBLE EVIDENCE OF CORRUPT DEALINGS IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT. "PEOPLE WON'T TALK," HE SAID. SALIM POINTED OUT THAT INDONESIA LACKS AN ADEQUATE LEGAL INFRA-STRUCTURE AND THAT THE BUREAUCRACY IS NOT CAPABLE OF PROVIDING EFFECTIVE SAFEGUARDS AGAINST THE ABUSE OF PUBLIC POSITION FOR PERSONAL GAIN. HE ALSO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE PRESS IS NOT ENTIRELY FREE IN INDONESIA AND THEREFORE NOT IN A POSITION LIKE THE PRESS IN THE U.S. TO EFFECTIVELY PURSUE INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM. MOREOVER, THE POLITICAL PARTY SYSTEM IN INDONESIA HAS NOT EVOLVED TO THE POINT WHERE IT IS AN EFFECTIVE CHECK ON THE ACTIONS OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS.

4. COMMENT. THE MEETING WAS MARKED BY THE OPEN MANNER IN WHICH SALIM DISCUSSED THE SENSITIVE TOPIC OF CORRUPTION IN HIGH GOVERNMENT CIRCLES AND THE AMOUNT OF TIME HE WAS WILLING TO DEVOTE TO THIS SUBJECT. HE APPEARS SINCERE IN HIS DESIRE TO MOVE AGAINST CORRUPTION AS VIGOROUSLY AS THE CONSTRAINTS WHICH HE OUTLINED PERMIT. HIS SUCCESS
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WILL DEPEND ON THE STRENGTH OF THE EVIDENCE AND THE BUREAUCRATIC ALLIES HE CAN AMASS AND ON THE BREADTH OF THE MANDATE UNDER WHICH HE OPERATES.
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